

PILGRIMAGE, PERFORMATIVITY, AND BRITISH MUSLIMS: SCRIPTED AND UNSCRIPTED ACCOUNTS OF THE HAJJ AND UMRA¹

Seán McLoughlin

Introduction

I don't think the person who you're describing it to can really appreciate what you're telling them ... if you are eating something ... and it's very tasty or it's very sweet, and you try to explain that to somebody ... they will never experience how that food tastes, how nice it is, until they've actually experienced that for themselves. (Danyal, 40s, engineer, Scotland, Hajj 1999)

Western scholarship on the Hajj has mainly been the focus of generalised comment rather than specific, in-depth studies (Roff 1985). In Islamic studies especially, the pilgrimage has most often been studied with reference to Muslim history from the prophetic era until early modern times (Von Grunebaum 1950; Peters 1994). More often than not the focus has been upon more or less authoritative texts associated with different literary traditions, as well as the material artefacts of high and sometimes more popular culture (cf. Porter & Saif 2013). However, since the 1990s, in edited collections and journal articles, anthropologists working on Muslim societies have also begun to include the Hajj among their interests. Topics of study have included travel and the religious imagination, social change, the idea of sacred homelands, and ritual transformations (Eickelman & Piscatori 1990; Fischer & Abedi 1990; Delaney 1990; Werbner 1998). However, while contributing to the still relatively new sub-field of the anthropology of Islam (Geertz 1968; Eickelman 1981; Asad 1986; cf. Lindholm 2002; Varisco 2005; McLoughlin 2007), perhaps surprisingly such work has not provided a systematic account of lived experiences of performing the Hajj. While fascinating memoirs do begin to illuminate the pilgrimage thus (Hammoudi

1 I completed this chapter, and the November 2013 conference presentation at the National Museum of Ethnology on which it is based, during a one-year British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship. I wish to thank the British Academy for their very generous support of my research and writing on British Muslims and the Hajj during 2013–2014. I also wish to thank the British Museum, and especially Dr. Venetia Porter, for inviting me to contribute to the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded research that supported the *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam* exhibition during 2012. As noted in the body of my text, the interviews on which this chapter is based were collected by the British Museum during the 'Living Islam' festival in 2011. Dr. Porter kindly gave me permission to have the interviews transcribed and to write about the data herein.

2006; cf. Malcolm X 1964; Wolfe 1997), it is this gap in the literature that my research addresses. Working across the fields of the anthropology of Islam, pilgrimage studies, sociology of religion, and diaspora studies to present a case study of late-modern lived 'religioning' (Nye 2000) on the move (cf. Coleman & Eade 2004), as in my previous work on British Pakistanis, in this chapter I put the meaning of pilgrims' 'Hajj Stories' centre stage (McLoughlin 2009a,b; cf. Haq & Jackson 2009; DeHanas 2013).

To date studies of pilgrimage have not been very much concerned with the Hajj or Islam per se. Early relevant work across anthropology and the study of religions focused upon the inherent devotional magnetism of sacred place (Eliade 1958), as well as the transitions in status associated with powerful rites of separation from the structures of everyday life (Van Gennep 1909), and the temporary anti-structural feelings of collective effervescence and *communitas* emergent from performing rituals (Durkheim 1912; Turner 1969; 1974a,b). While still incredibly valuable, subsequent postmodern critiques maintained that the boundary between the sacred and the profane was more 'fragile' and 'contested' than this work suggested, proposing instead the deconstruction of pilgrimage into 'an arena of competing discourses' (Eade & Sallnow 1991: 5, 26; cf. Fischer & Abedi 1990 on the 'contested' Shi'i Hajj). However, as I have argued elsewhere in relation to the anthropology of Islam, anti-essentialist approaches can be limiting, too, if in tackling the problem of essence scholars simply dissolve the significance of religion for social actors (McLoughlin 2007). Thus, following an important reassessment of pilgrimage studies by Coleman & Eade (2004; cf. Coleman 2002), my study of the Hajj exhibits two main approaches.

Firstly, with Saba Mahmood's (2005) discussion of Judith Butler (1997) in mind, I explore how, in recounting their own deeply material and embodied performances of rites and rituals, British Muslims actively shape their own religious subjectivities, while also 're-producing' and re-making orthodox and orthoprax Islamic scripts. Still, I do not ignore the fact that, while all ideologies aspire to coherence (cf. Asad 1986), the inherent instability associated with their repeated, contextual performance creates the space for their destabilisation and contestation. Not least in a late modern age of glocalisation, all social actors are positioned by multiple and sometimes paradoxical 'lived structures' from religious revivalism to consumer capitalism (cf. Turner 1994: 202; Appadurai 1996; Featherstone 2002; Boubekur & Roy 2012). Thus I also explore the realities of performing the Hajj and Umra, reflections that include reference to various uncertainties, challenges, disappointments, and ambivalences.

Secondly, in light of the comments above, and like the study of contemporary culture per se (Clifford 1997), it is clear that the study of the Hajj cannot be confined to Mecca as a circumscribed, time-space location set apart from wider social, economic, and political circulations, flows, and inferences (Coleman & Eade 2004; cf. Fischer & Abedi 1990). In this regard, I necessarily encompass my

discussion of what pilgrims 'do' in the Holy Places within a wider ethnographic view of their whole journey, including both religiously inspired and everyday experiences before departure from, and following return to, the 'sending' society of the UK. Ultimately, I suggest that Muslim religioning must be charted across cartographies of belief, practice, and identity that are local, multi-local, and supra-local (Tweed 1997; 2006; cf. McLoughlin 2010; 2013a). That is, they map an embodied and performed consciousness of, and attachment to, places, people and beings at scales that are both horizontal and territorial *and* vertical and transcendent.

The set of data I explore here was collected by British Museum staff as a contribution to its wider public engagement surrounding the very successful 2012 exhibition *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam*.² To capture British Muslims' video testimonies concerning their experiences of the Hajj, assistant curator Qaisra Khan and other members of the team set off from London during a long summer weekend in 2011 for the 'Living Islam' festival. Held at Lincolnshire Showground in the English East Midlands, 'Living Islam' is a huge undertaking for the Islamic Society of Britain,³ and so the event is organised only once every few years. With around 5,000 British Muslims attending over four days in a relaxed, holiday atmosphere following the fast of Ramadan, the event represented an excellent opportunity to invite interested visitors to record their 'Hajj Stories'.⁴ In a dedicated marquee, a professional film maker asked this self-selecting sample open-ended questions such as: 'How come you went for Hajj?'; 'Who did you go with?'; 'How did you feel when you got there?'; 'What's your most vivid memory?'; 'What did you bring back?'; and 'Would you go again?'.⁵

While I was not directly involved in the collection of this data myself, I did spend time with the British Museum team at the festival, having previously discussed my own research on UK Hajj-going with them at the planning stage (McLoughlin 2009a,b). I had also been invited to collect more in-depth interviews with British Muslims as part of an exhibition-related award to the museum by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). Moreover, the video recordings collected at 'Living Islam' were later shared with me as part of my collaboration with the British Museum team and, with the permission of the exhibition's curator Dr. Venetia Porter, I arranged for them to be professionally

2 A website recording key elements of the British Museum's 2012 exhibition can be found at: www.britishmuseum.org/explore/themes/hajj.aspx.

3 The 'Living Islam' festival and the Islamic Society of Britain per se are very much targeted at families and young people, having emerged when, during the 1980s and early 1990s, the 'second generation' activists associated with Young Muslims UK began to marry and have their own families (Lewis 1994).

4 Contributors were asked to sign a release form with children's contributions signed off by parents.

5 See video clips at http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/paast_exhibitions/2012/hajj/hajj_stories.aspx.

transcribed.⁶ In total, 33 Hajj Stories⁷ produced 250 minutes of testimonies, with the longest contribution amounting to more than 3000 words and the shortest to less than 500 words. Most were between 500 and 1500 words in length. Contributors were not asked by the interviewer to self-identify in any particular way beyond stating their name, their occupation, and where they lived. Nevertheless, using the video recordings and transcripts, I was able to map other aspects of participants' bio-data. Although I do not seek to compare the experiences of distinctive groups of British Muslim pilgrims by gender, age group, ethnicity, or year of Hajj or Umra participation, I do sometimes use this data to better contextualise individual accounts examined here. Of course, the names of all participants and, as necessary, other information that might identify them, have been anonymised.

Among this random sample, twenty participants had been for the Hajj, nine had been for the Umra, one did not record which pilgrimage had been performed, and three had not travelled for either but were still moved to record how the accounts of friends and family had impacted upon their own desire to journey to the Holy Places.⁸ Of those that had travelled for the Hajj or Umra, only three older men had made the pilgrimage during the 1970s, 1980s, or early 1990s, while roughly equal numbers had travelled either between 1995 and 1999 or since 2000.⁹ Nineteen of the participants were male and fourteen were female. Twenty-five were aged between sixteen and 49, five contributors were children of school age, and three were over 50 years old. Notably, only one-third of participants mentioned an ethnic identity at any point during their account—Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, English, Egyptian, and Kenyan—and then usually only in passing.¹⁰ All but a couple of the adult contributors were professionals working in sectors such as education, business, health, the media,

6 Funded by my British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship, I took 'Hajj Stories' video clips and a related exhibition of 14 A1 posters back to 'Living Islam' in 2014 (July 31–August 3).

7 Three transcripts were excluded from my analysis: those of one American and two South African Muslim contributors/visitors to 'Living Islam'.

8 A few accounts did not record the year of travel. One account did not record whether the pilgrim went for Hajj or Umra. Umra is focused only upon the performance of rituals associated with the Meccan sanctuary and takes place outside of the Hajj season.

9 Thus contributors' Hajj-going generally reflects the period during which the Hajj has come to greater public attention in the United Kingdom, that is, the late 1990s. Following various human disasters in the Holy Places, the United Kingdom's first pilgrim welfare organisation, the Association of British Hujjaj (1998), was established, as well as the British Hajj Delegation (2000). See McLoughlin (2013a).

10 Apart from the case of a convert to Islam, this tended to be children aged fifteen and under, and older or retired people. While contributors were not asked directly about such matters, the relative insignificance of ethnic identities aligns with the ethos of the Islamic Society of Britain. From its inception, it has sought to affirm Muslims' rootedness in Britain, as well as to normalise its multi-ethnic character in a way that has rarely been the case amongst most grassroots organisations (McLoughlin 2005).

law, design, the arts, and science.¹¹ One-third of participants were from London and the South of England, and nearly one-quarter were from Manchester, both areas where there is a significant British-Muslim middle class. There were just a few participants from the more typically working-class communities in West Yorkshire and Birmingham, although Glasgow in Scotland was somewhat better represented.

The exposition that follows, then, is not based on direct observation of, or immersion in, the settings in the Holy Places where the Hajj and the Umra are performed.¹² Indeed, like *hajji* Danyal cited at the beginning of this chapter, a number of participants insisted that access to the authenticity of the experience of pilgrimage comes only with ‘being there’. At the same time, the limited number, and open-ended nature, of the interview questions asked, as well as pilgrims’ own discretion, undoubtedly meant that some aspects of their embodied performances and material practices were not addressed in detail or at all. Thus I inevitably provide only a partial account of the complex religious, social, cultural, political, and economic realities of Hajj-going among the 22,000–25,000 British Muslims who travel annually (McLoughlin 2013b; cf. Bianchi 2004 on the organisation of the Hajj worldwide). My text represents one of a number of possible readings and interpretations, which cannot necessarily be generalised to British *hajjis*. Nevertheless, with twenty years’ experience studying British Muslim contexts, I am relatively well placed to assess and interpret the richly textured oral testimonies in question here.¹³

The New *Hajjis*: Social Change, ‘Being Called’, and Constrained Choices

As the title of the National Museum of Ethnology’s exhibition *Longing for Mecca* (2013–2014) captured so aptly, the Hajj and the Umra have long since sustained the Islamicate imagination through time and across space (cf. Eickelman & Piscatori 1990). Formal and popular cultural vehicles for this have included pious texts and poetry, artefacts and images, ritual practices, and oral and musical traditions, as well as returning pilgrims’ tales. For example, Riyadh (40s, designer, London, Hajj 1997), who travelled with his mother, reflected on growing up with photographs of his very differently located grandparents’

11 Like the Pakistani Jama’at-i Islami-related movements to which the Islamic Society of Britain can trace its roots, the organisation has a Muslim middle-class base (once dubbed ‘YUMMies’ or Young Upwardly Mobile Muslims) (McLoughlin 2005).

12 I am not a Muslim myself and non-Muslims are prohibited from visiting the Holy Places. However, I have immersed myself in in-depth accounts recording Muslims’ experiences, watched satellite TV coverage of the Hajj, and consumed related cultural production.

13 The diversity of the data was retained with each transcript, first read carefully before coding inductively using Nvivo 10 software. This iterative process of data analysis produced a matrix of key nodes and sub-nodes suggestive initially of simple themes and then broader categories, which in turn provided the platform for developing observations about more substantive patterns, theories, and explanations.

early modern Hajj experience. The sharp contrast between their lengthy and challenging journey by ship from the Indo-Pak subcontinent framed his own late-modern preparations to fly from the United Kingdom to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with comparative ease.

In those days people used to travel by sea. They used to take their own rations. And when people used to say goodbye to them, they might not see them again. There was so much difficulty in the travelling. While they were there they used to do their own cooking. There were no hotels, just the campsites ... So those pictures were very vivid images in my journey.

Increasingly intensive and extensive glocalisation has therefore transformed the very possibilities of Muslims travelling for the Hajj. The number of overseas pilgrims has mushroomed since the mid-1950s from around 100,000 to more than 3,000,000 Muslims in total performing the Hajj in 2012 (McLoughlin 2013b). Moreover, since the early- to mid-2000s, interventions by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have reshaped the structures framing the pilgrim experience. For instance, in the late 1990s, then-student Majid (40s, media/marketing, Scotland, Hajj organiser) paid £950 for a flight and a mattress on the floor of a very basic apartment some distance from the *Masjid al-Haram* in Mecca as part of a university Islamic society Hajj trip. However, in an effort to drive up standards and increase capacity, as well as to boost the country's religious tourism economy (cf. Henderson 2011), the Ministry of Hajj began to insist that pilgrims not travelling as part of a Muslim state delegation (*e.g.* all Muslims in the West) must organise their visa and accommodation through 'approved' travel agents, of which there are around 80 in the United Kingdom (McLoughlin 2013b). With heightened global consciousness of Islamic identity among diasporas, a rising new middle class, and generous quotas, some United Kingdom tour operators now offer '5-star', 'VIP', and 'luxury' Hajj packages costing £5,000 or more. One British Muslim pilgrim who went for the Hajj in 2008 (Asma, 40s, diversity officer, West Midlands) spoke of the experience of travelling with a reputable London-based company whose marketing strap-line is, 'We will worry about your Hajj more than you do'. However, with millions of pilgrims now gathering in a single place, over a certain number of days, just once a year, and the Hajj industry worldwide being at once lucrative and risky, fraud has become a problem. In the UK this is not least because of a complex industry structure that includes sub-agents and touts as well as Ministry of Hajj approved tour operators. Thus, Mobeen (40s, General Practitioner, West Yorkshire, Hajj 2008) related how, in 2007, he and nine members of his family 'were told ... by the tour operator that, not only had they not secured our Hajj visa ... more than 50 pilgrims lost out on more than £250,000'.

Despite rising prices and pilgrim quotas that have reduced by 20 per cent since 2013 to accommodate further expansion of the Great Mosque of Mecca, British Muslims have increasingly been able to ‘consume’ travel to the Holy Places at a time of their need, desire, and choosing (McLoughlin 2009a). Thus they represent a new, late-modern sort of ‘pilgrim-tourist’ (Coleman & Eade 2004: 9; cf. Baumann 1996; Badone & Roseman 2004; Stausberg 2011). Certainly, now that this is the case, an earnestness to fulfil the duty of the Hajj was foremost in the accounts of two male participants. As Latif (20s, accountant, South of England, Hajj 2003) explained, ‘I knew it’s a duty ... a lot of people perhaps leave it later on but ... after I graduated I started work full-time ... and that’s one of the first things I did after I’d saved up some money’. Similarly, Danyal (40s, engineer, Scotland) accompanied his wife soon after their wedding in 1999.

We decided that rather than go to other places we should first and foremost complete our Hajj which is ... one of our major responsibilities. Where you have your health and you have your faculties and you have enough money ... then you should complete the Hajj.

Often nurtured by a spirit of religious revivalism, such a view is gathering support across the generations among contemporary British Muslims. Nevertheless, the majority of participants at ‘Living Islam’ did not speak about Hajj-going in such clear-cut terms. For Halima (30s, editor, London, Umra date unknown), her sense of duty and desire was balanced with caution. She was anxious about being spiritually prepared enough to embrace the traditionally ascribed ‘pious’ status of a *hajja* relatively early in life.

It is something that is a yearning. I’m nervous though because I feel like maybe I’m not prepared yet ... I probably have to overcome those fears and really just make the intention that “This should become part of my life and I should become a *hajji*”.

Moreover, even now that most Muslims have more realistic expectations of journeying for the Hajj than in the past, given the demands of family and working life, it is a duty that is often deferred for practical as well as religious reasons. New opportunities and ways of being *hajjis* bring new dilemmas. For instance, given religio-cultural expectations in terms of family responsibilities, Muslim women have perhaps been most affected in this regard. Having made her arrangements to travel, Asma (40s, diversity officer, West Midlands, Hajj 2008) was very concerned as a mother about the well-documented dangers of performing some of the rituals, including the *tawaf* (circumambulation of the Ka’ba) and stoning of the *jamarat* (pillars).

I'd been very reluctant about going on the Hajj once it had been booked ... I was having a lot of fears and worries and I was convinced ... that something was going to happen out there and that was one of the things that was upsetting me the most about leaving my children behind.

Although some tour operators will find ways around the regulations, women are also less free to travel independently for Hajj because, according to gendered Islamic norms, they require a male relative or *mahram* to escort them. Some male respondents specifically mentioned accompanying a mother or wife or both on pilgrimage.¹⁴ Indeed, roughly equal numbers of contributors had travelled with their immediate family, their extended family, or in couples. However, in contrast to women, several men were able to travel for the Hajj as individuals on pilgrimage tours organised independently, as part of a student group, as expert or activist guests of the Saudi Arabian authorities, or while working in the Kingdom.

Among around half of the contributors who went into more detail about the diverse personal circumstances surrounding their journey, one Islamic script stood out as overwhelmingly significant. As Dilshad (40s, businessman, West Midlands, Hajj date unknown) put it, 'We have this notion, this belief that you can go only when God calls you'. Underlying the way in which many Muslims tend to speak (publicly at least) about Hajj-going is the Sunni belief in *qadar*, or predestination, which is a matter of *aqida* (creed). As even Liaqat (school boy, North-West, Umra 2011) ably explained 'It's down to God because it's God's choice. He's wrote everything, every movement that we do in our life'. Therefore Ayesha (40s, IT, North-East), whose desires to go for the Hajj were as yet unfulfilled—perhaps because she is a single mother and has no male relative to escort her—still asserted her faith in God even as she struggled with a certain 'Hajj envy'.

It is a dream ... every time I see friends or family going for Hajj I sort of feel envious. I know I'm not supposed to. I'm happy for them ... but ... I pray for that invitation ... so that I can feel at peace with myself. I think He knows when it is best for me to go on that journey.

Initially, for Robina (40s, artist, South of England, Hajj 2007), this notion of 'being called' 'was something I'd never really understood. I thought it was just something they [people] say'. Eventually, however, after some 30 years of waiting and having 'almost given up hope', the opportunity arose when she was

¹⁴ The *mahram* question may be especially complicated for single mothers, recent migrants, and some unmarried converts. N.B. 'Women over the age of forty-five (45) may travel without a *mahram* with an organized group. They must, however submit a no objection letter from her husband, son or brother authorizing her to travel for Hajj with the named group. This letter should be notarized'. http://www.saudiembassy.net/services/hajj_requirements.aspx

in most personal need: 'It did happen in a very bizarre way, at a time when I was pretty desperate'. Testimonies of 'being called' for Hajj thus narrate a trust in God's plans but also create the performative and discursive space to negotiate complex personal circumstances at a time when opportunities to travel are readily available. Indeed, inspired moments often become the legitimate means for finally announcing one's plans. For Tanweer (30s, chemist, West Yorkshire, Hajj 2005), the account of his final 'decision' to travel therefore narrates being decisively affected by pious songs set against the broader context of gossip in the community.

It was very sudden and a lot of people talk about it like that ... One of the people we know ... she met my wife in the market ... and she says, "Oh, I hear you're going to Hajj". And my wife says, "Well, may Allah make your words blessed, because we have no plans" ... And then ... she mentioned it to me a couple of days later. We were on our way to a *nashid* [pious singing] concert ... One of the artists was singing about being at the Ka'ba, drinking from the wells of Zamzam ... After that I thought, "Yes, we're going".

Performing Islamic Scripts: Sacred Place, Liminality, and Communitas

I find it quite difficult to compartmentalise each experience as a ritual, I see it as a very holistic experience and I think mainly it was the fact that I was walking in the footsteps of these great personalities that I had always heard about and spoken about and read about and thought about and imagined. (Aminah, 20s, trainee solicitor, London, Hajj 1997)

Like the imaginary homeland for many ancient diasporas, 'a place displaced beyond the horizon, creating a desire to bridge the distance ... a presence that is absent', for Muslims the mythic power of Mecca and Medina is 'simultaneously physical and spiritual', a 'geography of the soul ... predisposing their footsteps in its direction' (Delaney 1990: 516, 517). Travel to the Holy Places thus ritually and symbolically connects Muslims to a powerful chain of (placed) memory (cf. Hervieu Leger 2000), as well as a sacralised 'homing desire' (McLoughlin 2010). Thus for Danyal (40s, engineer, Scotland, Hajj 1999), the Hajj was a journey to 'the birthplace of Islam', while for Bilal (30s, Hajj 1999), his arrival in Mecca 'felt like coming home ... It was a magical feeling to be part of this history ... like all my faith had been concentrated into a few moments'. Like Aminah who was quoted above, for Latif (20s, accountant, South of England, Hajj 2003) and Rashid (30s, lecturer, North-West, Hajj 2004), the authority of this sacred history lay in emulating the most perfect models of monotheism.

We were rehearsing and re-enacting the rituals which were done by people thousands of years ago, people who we regard as the greatest people on earth ... We do this because this is what Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) has done, and Prophet Ismail, and our Prophet Muhammad (*salla Allahu alayhi wasallam*).

In their testimonies, participants tended to dwell on the most iconic moments of the Hajj and the Umra, with seeing the Ka'ba for the first time an experience that typically overshadowed all others. As God's House (*Bayt Allah*), it is of course the focal point of a Muslim psycho-geography based in the everyday bodily knowledge of religioning (cf. Delaney 1990). As one respondent (Halima, 30s, editor, London, Umra date unknown) put it, 'you're going somewhere which you focused towards five times a day as a Muslim, it's the direction [*qibla*] of prayer'. Greater prior exposure to real-time images of the Holy Places in the digital age—the pictures of the Ka'ba on TV or in photographs, which many people love to have adorn their walls at home' (Danyal, 40s, engineer, Scotland, Hajj 1999)—as well as abbreviated journeys by air, have not staled the significance of physically 'being there' in person. Danyal continued 'I could not believe that ... a few hours ago I was in Glasgow ... and here I am now ... at the House of Allah ... you're physically there'. A small number of pilgrims did frame their remarks by explicitly addressing the theological significance of the Ka'ba. Tanweer (30s, chemist, West Yorkshire, Hajj 2005) noted 'It's not the building, it's just our relationship with our Creator which makes this thing special'. Daud (50s, academic, London, Hajj 1984) also alluded to 'the unseen dimension', but only Rashid (30s, lecturer, North-West, Hajj 2004) elaborated on the Ka'ba's supra-local, transcendent significance:

Muslims believe that up in the seventh heaven there is a similar but much bigger cube which is called *al-Bayt al-Ma'mur* [the Frequented House; Qur'anic verse 52:4]. Each day, as narrated in the authentic *hadith* [reported narrations and customs of the Prophet], there are 70,000 angels that also do the *tawaf* [circumambulation] up in the heavens ... The Black Stone, we believe that it is from paradise ... and that it was touched by God.

First and foremost, however, most participants typically reflected on their bodily performances and their subsequent outpouring of emotions. The Ka'ba is sometimes glimpsed first from a distance. Therefore Latif (20s, accountant, South of England, Hajj 2003) related 'We saw glimpses of it so my heart started beating a bit more faster'. However, following a well-practiced script in pilgrim narratives, many others try to approach it with head bowed and eyes lowered, partly out of respect but also in a deliberate attempt to heighten the experience for themselves. Thus Halima (30s, editor, London, Umra date unknown) recounted the following 'My husband took me and he said, "Focus on the floor as you walk. So don't see the Ka'ba until you're very close" ... So I walked head bowed until

he said, “Now look up”. That first glance of the Ka’ba is variously described by pilgrims as ‘amazing’, ‘breathtaking’, ‘beautiful’, ‘magical’, ‘fabulous’, ‘surreal’, ‘ethereal’, ‘simple’, ‘magnificent’, and ‘awe-inspiring’. They also describe being ‘overcome’, ‘tearful’, ‘joyful’, ‘humble’, ‘moved’, ‘overwhelmed’, ‘inspired’, ‘privileged’, and ‘refreshed’. The Ka’ba is touched, kissed, and smelled, as well as seen. Both Noreen (20s, accountant, London, Hajj 1998) and Aminah (20s, trainee solicitor, London, Hajj 1997) respectively spoke of a deeply embodied experience that held them transfixed.

You get this sort of rush through your body ... it just fills you up ... you just want to stand there forever, just not move from that one spot ... a lot of what you experience happens on such a spiritual level, almost like a molecular level, when you’re vibrating with that anticipation ... it’s surreal because it’s something you’ve seen so often, never in front of you.

At this moment, when they glimpse the Ka’ba for the first time, pilgrims are taught to make their acts of supplication. Rauf (30s, management consultant, North-West, Hajj 1999) related how, during the spiritual journey of a life-time, he was able to share news of another potentially life-changing event: ‘We [he and his wife] actually announced to the grandparents that they were expecting their first grandchild in front of the Ka’ba and the fact that that they were able to turn to the Ka’ba straight away, hold their hands up [in prayer] and thank God was wonderful’.

More than half of the ‘Living Islam’ contributors also took the opportunity to speak about the *ihram* and what it symbolises. In the normative Islamic tradition it typically connotes an altered state of liminal separation from everyday time and space that highlights a radical crossing into the cosmic, supra-local realm of Allah (cf. Tweed 1997; 2006). Ayesha (40s, IT, North-East) suggested that ‘It’s like you leave your whole physical world behind ... and you just have one ambition, to please God’. Munaza (20s, student, London, Hajj 2009) opined ‘What was strange for me was the timelessness of it all because everybody is there just to worship God ... it’s like being in another world where it’s really tranquil, it’s really, really peaceful’. And according to Nasreen (30s, mother, North-West, Umra 2010), ‘You forgot all the problems that you had’. Indeed, with this turn inwards to God and the self, some pilgrims spoke about temporarily forgetting even close family. Robina (40s, artist, South of England, Hajj 2007) insisted ‘It is literally between you and God. I’d forgotten all about my children, and the only thing that you can remember is yourself and that one day, as a Muslim, you believe that you’re going to go and stand there again with all of humanity’.

Robina’s comments underline again that the Hajj not only points backwards in time to the origins of monotheism, but also forwards to the end of time when humankind will gather again at Arafat. As Dilshad (40s, businessman, West Midlands, Hajj date unknown) explained, ‘What we believe is that on the

Day of Judgment I won't recognise my son and my mother won't recognise me because it will just be between me and God and I will only be concerned with my own fate, whether I go to heaven or hell'.

Resembling a shroud, male pilgrims' ritual wearing of two pieces of unstitched white cloth is also a material reminder that, in a context set apart from the patterns, norms, and preoccupations of mundane time and space, the rituals of the Hajj structure in reverse order the re-enactment of a sacralised journey from sin and death to purity and rebirth (Werbner 1998: 97; cf. Werbner this volume; Van Gennep 1909; Turner 1969). As Zubair (60s, retired businessman, London, Hajj 1993) explained, 'When you are buried you are going with these two *kurtas* [cloths]. You're born naked and you're nearly naked'. According to Junayd (30s, consultant, North-West, Hajj 2001), 'When they [human beings] will be raised on the Day of Judgement they'll probably be in that attire ... that's your destiny'. Danyal (40s, engineer, Scotland, Hajj 1999) added 'One day you will also have to remove your worldly clothing ... that's a reminder of the shortness of life here and the greatness of the life hereafter'. Indeed, as Nuh (60s, retired engineer, London, Hajj 1980s) noted, with millions of pilgrims gathered in a single place, mortality is all around. 'They also bring out the dead people ... and so when you think of that and ... with the way you are dressed ... it made me very humble'.

In Hajj narratives, feelings of liminal separation and anonymity also celebrate Islam's universality and notions of unity in diversity (cf. Malcolm X 1964). As Turner's theory of pilgrimage as anti-structure asserts, feelings of *communitas* are said to emerge from the liminal power of performing rituals in unison (Turner 1969; 1974a,b; cf. Durkheim 1912; Cohen 1985). Thus, once again, respondents identified their physical performance of key rituals, from their opening *tawaf* around the Ka'ba to the *qurbani* sacrifice that seals the Hajj (cf. Werbner 1998), as having a profound effect on them emotionally. The scale of human beings gathered in one place seemingly with one purpose gave rise to a 'sacred' collective energy that they associated with *tawhid* (God's oneness) and the *umma*.

What affected me the most was the *tawaf* ... the people beside me, in front of me, next to me were all here for the same reason ... it was all about the oneness of everything, the oneness of Allah, the oneness of humanity. (Munaza, 20s, student, London, Hajj 2009)

You should shave your hair and, again, it's the unity because everyone, all the male pilgrims, when you're standing there, you're looking so similar, it's, like, just as God sees you, it's all the same. (Latif, 20s, accountant, South of England, Hajj 2003)

As Nigel (30s, teacher, North-West, Hajj 1998) also related, 'The whole point is to symbolise equality, so everybody is the same regardless of background, race, wealth, status ... that's powerful'. Atif (20s, student, West Midlands, Umra 1998) remarked 'It just makes you realise that it doesn't matter what colour skin

you are, what you wear, where you're from, what language you speak'. For Nuh (60s, retired engineer, London, Hajj 1980s), such experiences were extremely affecting.

To share those moments with people which are so different from you. People they come from very, very remote parts of the world, they can barely manage the trip, old people, rich, educated, not educated ... you don't know if the person next to you may be the king or the cook of the restaurant nearby ... It makes you humble.

Pilgrims also described small acts of harmonious fellowship and co-operation with other *hajjis*. According to Riyadh (40s, designer, London, Hajj 1997), 'There's so many different types of people you meet ... obviously, you see them, you feel them, but at the same time you converse with them, you shake hands with them'. As Tanweer (30s, chemist, West Yorkshire, Hajj 2005) related 'I could speak a little bit of Arabic ... We found out that he was a Malaysian studying in Mecca, and that he was a Man U fan. My friend was a Liverpool fan so they got talking and I found another universal language: football!'—. While the key tropes in such accounts are transcending wealth, race, and ethnicity, for Robina (40s, artist, South of England, Hajj 2007), and despite women being able to 'wear whatever they want' during the Hajj (Rashid, 30s, lecturer, North-West, Hajj 2004),¹⁵ gender differences were also suspended in a way that remained significant. 'Being used to mosques in England where women and men are separate, this [*Masjid al-Haram*] was a place where everybody was together [i.e. not gender segregated] and that was quite different for me'.

Unscripted Performances: Uncertainty, Anxiety, and Other 'Real' Hajj Stories

Instead of the Ka'ba I was focussed—I know it sounds quite bizarre—... [on] all the skin tones, the patterns in their clothes, textures ... And he [her husband] just looked at me [and said], "What are you doing? What are you thinking about?" But it was just something I couldn't help. (Robina, 40s, artist, South of England, Hajj 2007)

Pilgrims' utopian experiences in sacralised time and space must be seen as emerging out of their temporary, contingent, and embodied time-space locations and lived material practices (Vásquez 2011). Unsurprisingly in this view, 'Living Islam' participants' accounts of 'being there' also reflect many unscripted performances that qualify, destabilise, and sometimes contest dominant Islamic

15 Mobeen (40s, General Practitioner, West Yorkshire, Hajj 2008) suggested that 'the face must be exposed, as must the hands and feet ... the head is covered' although in practice some women may wear, and in discussions of the relevant *fiqh* may be encouraged to wear, a face covering that is not a *niqab*.

scripts. They highlight pilgrims' multiple time-space and lived-structural locations (cf. McLoughlin 2009a: 311; 2009b: 144) in terms of age, health, ethnicity, education, responsibilities, and character on the one hand, and issues such as modernisation-versus-heritage on the other. For instance, this is evident in pilgrims' reflections on uncertain ritual performance and (body) knowledge. There is very significant textual commentary on the *fiqh* (jurisprudence) of the Hajj and there are ritually sanctioned means of compensating for 'failing' to re-enact ideal religious norms. However, such matters were not a priority for most respondents. Dilshad (40s, businessman, West Midlands, Hajj date unknown) acknowledged frankly his lack of expertise: 'I'm not a scholar, I don't know the absolute nitty-gritty of it'. Nuh (60s, retired engineer, London, Hajj 1980s) was much less concerned about ritual correctness and theological significance as compared to 'feelings': 'you do it seven times, it's called *tawaf*. Why it is done, to be honest, I do not know ... Neither I am interested. I know I do it, I feel good while I do it'. Others were equally honest that, at key moments, they simply had not felt what the model habitus of a *hajji* or *hajja* suggested, even if such lack of feeling tended to be only temporary (and sometimes miraculously resolved). So, despite being in the House of God and in a holy state of *ihram*, initially Asma (40s, diversity officer, West Midlands, Hajj 2008) simply could not leave the mundane world behind. 'You're thousands of miles away, your thoughts are with your children and I became very, very upset and saying to my husband, "I want to go home"'. Similarly, Tanweer could not follow the script and emote in the way that others seemed so readily to do. 'I'd heard a lot of stories about ... how the sight of the Ka'ba can affect you emotionally and I have to admit, as I was going around I didn't feel any emotion. It was just going around a building'.

Many pilgrims would probably maintain, like Aminah (20s, trainee solicitor, London, Hajj 1997), that, especially whilst in a state of *ihram*, 'complaining just wasn't on my mind'. However, tellingly she does acknowledge that 'maybe I'm remembering things in a more rose-tinted way'. Indeed, whether in terms of the heat and potential for dehydration, simply walking and waiting in such circumstances, or a lack of manners (*adab*) on behalf of other pilgrims, at key moments performing the Hajj can be extremely physically testing and present many practical challenges. This is especially the case for the young, sick, and elderly. Munaza (20s, student, London, Hajj 2009) recalled circumambulating the Ka'ba as a teenager: 'I could feel the sun just like beating down on me, so much so that I actually started to cry ... I wanted to get it over and done with'. Amongst millions of others, getting lost is also an occupational hazard for pilgrims of all ages. Dilwar (schoolboy, South of England, Umra 2011) remarked 'I got pushed a lot because there was so many people behind me and then I ended up letting go of my mum'. For Nasreen (30s, mother, North-West, Umra 2010), her fear and anxiety about such things was enough to abbreviate her participation in an environment that, despite being 'sacred', she still perceived as alien.

Just going to a new country is quite a bit scary, like a different experience ... They [members of her family] got the chance to kiss the Black Stone but I didn't do that. I was a bit scared for my life to be honest with you. There were lots of people crowded around it.

Suffering from a serious medical condition, Hafiz (60s, retired businessman, London, Hajj 1993) also struggled to stone the *jamarat* (pillars) without assistance from others. 'I was a heart patient, it was suffocating me. So people helped me to hit the Shaytan [Devil] and take me out of there. So really it's not easy if you are not in good health'. It was also during the rigours of stoning the devils that Dilshad (40s, businessman, West Midlands, Hajj date unknown) almost came to grief. Like a few other male pilgrims, he revealed the challenge of protecting his modesty while wearing the *ihram*: 'I actually lost my top part when you go to throw the stones ... I checked and thank God I hadn't lost my bottom one ... it wasn't so organised [then], so there was instances when many people died ...'. The pressure and stress on the *hajjis*, who often have to be in a certain place to perform the requisite rites at a particular time, is made worse by the sheer volume of traffic on the roads. This makes for very long and slow bus journeys in a fleet of vehicles in need of upgrading.

We had to arrive back in Mina by sunrise and we had an hour to get back and there was a total jam of traffic. You just cannot imagine it and everybody was panicking ... So we basically just abandoned the van. There was about 25 of us, got off and started walking. It was just mad ... this guy ... he was hitchhiking on a motorbike. You'll see things, amazing things, and you think, "Oh my God, this is just not happening!" And you just kind of join in and do it yourself. (Maryam, 30s, company director, North-West, Hajj 2007)

Many of the testimonies also reflect upon the discrepancies between pilgrims' often-idealised expectations concerning the Holy Places and the realities confronted there. Despite widespread negative comments in UK media circles,¹⁶ respondents' remarks about questions of heritage and modernisation are somewhat ambivalent overall. Liaqat (school boy, North-West, Umra 2011) was very direct: 'I thought it would be like nice and peaceful and very beautiful with all the Muslim architecture and stuff but it was not like that when I got there, actually'. However, more reflexive about her own rather unrealistic expectations, Robina (40s, artist, South of England, Hajj 2007) acknowledged the pressure upon the authorities to upgrade services and facilities.

16 See, for example, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/why-dont-more-muslims-speak-out-against-the-wanton-destruction-of-meccas-holy-sites-8229682.html>.

It was nothing like I expected. I think I spent a lot of time trying to imagine what it was like in the old days ... everything now is built up and, for me, I did want to see the old way, the journey that Hajar would have taken, exactly the way it was when she took it ... [But] I know it's very difficult to keep things the way that they were because of comfort and the number of people that have been coming through the years.

Munaza (20s, student, London, Hajj 2009) was discomforted by the very obvious juxtaposition of commercialism and pilgrimage (cf. Baumann 1996; Badone & Roseman 2004; Stausberg 2011). 'A lot of the time you can get warped into this whole tourism aspect of it when you come here and say, "Oh this is [the] Ka'ba, this is a Holy Place." Then you go shopping et cetera and you do all these touristy kind of things'. However, in terms of the range of global brands now available very close to the *Masjid al-Haram* following massive re-development (McLoughlin 2013b), many British-born Muslim pilgrims, who are already deeply integrated into cultures of consumer capitalism, actually enjoy the 'marketised' Islamic environment (cf. Turner 1994; Featherstone 2002; Boubekur & Roy 2012). Noreen (20s, accountant, London, Hajj 1998) recalled 'We found halal McDonalds, Burger King and ... because you didn't used to get that stuff here [in the UK] ... it was pretty cool'. Dilshad (40s, businessman, West Midlands, Hajj date unknown) related 'Coming from Britain ... to have Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken and everything halal is a wonderful thing'. As Halima (30s, editor, London, Umra date unknown) insightfully observed, in late modern Mecca especially, the boundary between the sacred and the profane, religion and the secular, utopian and lived space, is rather 'fragile' and typically is negotiated step-by-step (cf. Eade & Sallnow 1991: 26; McLoughlin 2009a: 311; 2009b: 144).

It's quite a hustling, bustling place, so to some extent when you're expecting to go for a spiritual journey and ... you've got trading and shops and that was surprising in the beginning. But then you realise—and I think to some extent [it] is a little of the essence of Islam in a way—it's spiritual and of this world. Your spiritual journey cannot be separated from your existence ... the physical and the spiritual which are connected to each other.

Being more clearly for public consumption than a conventional interview, the narratives draw attention to social divisions much less than in my previous research and to intra-Muslim (*e.g.* Wahhabi-Sufi-Shi'i) religious conflict not at all (cf. McLoughlin 2009a,b; Fischer and Abedi 1990). Therefore reference to discrepancies in social status and consciousness of differences vis-à-vis other Muslims tended to be opaque in most cases. While ultimately rescripting her experience as a pious lesson about the need for patience (*sabr*), Abida (30s, optometrist, North-West, Hajj 1998) bluntly remarked of fellow pilgrims' *adab*:

'It's hot, there's pushing going on, people's manners are different, customs are different ... just keep your mouth closed'. Liaqat (schoolboy, North-West, Umra 2011) identified the reliance of the Holy Places on migrant workers without being able to raise questions about their status and rights: 'The cleaners around the building of the Ka'ba, they were mostly Pakistani ... and most of the shopkeepers were Pakistani'. Thus while the dominant Islamic script of the Hajj is one of *communitas* and unity in diversity, competing ethno-national scripts are also performed every single day (cf. Eickelman & Piscatori 1990: xvi):

I remember sitting outside the hotel drinking tea with them [groups from other countries] and they said, "Where have you come from?" And I said, "From England." And they say, "No, you haven't come from England. Where have you *really* come from?" And you realise that they mean because you don't look English, and I think that's what made me think about our group that had come from England was actually the only multicultural group. (Robina (40s, artist, South of England, Hajj 2007)

Such issues were perhaps addressed most directly by Nigel (30s, teacher, North-West, Hajj 1998), an English convert to Islam, who complained about the scrutiny he received from the authorities on arrival in Saudi Arabia (cf. Malcolm X 1964). This was an unscripted experience that gave him some insight into the trials faced by his more 'profiled' Muslim brothers and sisters since the events of 9/11 and the London bombings of '7/7':

One of the more negative sides I suppose was looking very English, arriving in the airport ... actually being pulled to one side by the security guards asking me what I was doing there. I'm there in Jeddah, with all the *hajjis*, in my Hajj clothes and I'm being asked a question like that. It beggars belief. So obviously they wanted to test whether I really was a Muslim ... I [now] feel I understand what some Muslims go through in airport security in the West. They get pulled up ... Ironically I had that experience when I went to Saudi Arabia.

'Better than Any Holiday': Sacred Souvenirs, Making the Moral Self, and Still Longing for Mecca

Just short of half of the 'Living Islam' participants' testimonies mention returning from the Holy Places with various souvenirs, from Medina dates to prayer mats, beads, and caps, as well as headscarves, incense, perfume, and novelty 'Islam' branded jewellery, clocks, and laptops. However, it was concerning the most iconic of souvenirs, Zamzam water, that pilgrims consistently reflected upon the capacity of material objects to carry the sacred back home with them (cf.

Werbner 1988).¹⁷ Highlighting trans-local flows of sacralised material objects (cf. Appadurai 1996), Rashid (30s, lecturer, North-West, Hajj 2004) explained a *hadith* of the Prophet: “Zamzam, it is for what it has been drunk for” ... So whatever your intention ... it will happen’. As well as reputedly being extremely pure and sweet, the faithful such as Aliya (40s, careers advisor, East Midlands, Umra date unknown) believe that ‘it can help you, your health and sickness’. Thus, concerning Zamzam’s reputed miraculous and curative properties, and moreover its sacralising material contagiousness in everyday Muslim religioning far beyond the Holy Places, Moeen (schoolboy, London) related:

On the day they [his grandparents] came back [from the Hajj] and we went to see them, I had a really bad stomach ache ... When they brought [out] the Zamzam water I drank some of it ... and about an hour later I was completely fine. So it’s almost like the water just went inside and washed everything away.

According to Van Gennep (1909) rites of passage are sealed finally by the reincorporation of social actors back into society. However, rather than the status and respect traditionally shown to *hajjis* by the ‘sending’ community, as typically late modern, post-traditional ‘pilgrim-tourists’ (cf. Coleman & Eade 2004: 9), the ‘Living Islam’ contributors were more focused on turning inwards to questions of identity and the self. Thus, the most significant ‘thing’ that they returned home with was a unique and potentially ‘life-changing’ experience. Having completed his Hajj, Latif (20s, accountant, South of England, Hajj 2003) reflected upon the ‘spiritual uplift’ it gave him by invoking another *hadith*: ‘You come back as a newborn in terms of your previous things that you’ve done’. Back in *al-dunya* (the mundane world), Munaza (20s, student, London, Hajj 2009) wanted to recreate what she had discovered in the Holy Places or, as she put it, ‘having the time to reflect on what I’ve done so far, and the things that I need to start to do ... making time to be in that harmony with my Creator’. However, time and again, it is the relationship between embodied performance, emotion, and the ‘formation of moral selves’ that pilgrims refer to in their recollections (Asad 1986: 7; cf. Mahmood 2005). Daud (50s, academic, London, Hajj 1984) evocatively described a process of spiritual nourishment and (re)development: ‘I feel the entire experience of such a journey as if it is growing in me ... That’s what makes it a journey not like any journey ... it’s a new beginning ... to reassert you on the righteous path’. Nilofa (20s, London, teacher, Umra 1998), too, explained how the journey had been extremely positive for her self-discipline, both mentally and emotionally: ‘It made me feel so good ... It helped me to regulate my thoughts. I was quite peaceful for quite a long time afterwards’. Alluding again to the interiorised impact of physical action, Atiqa (Scotland, schoolgirl, Umra date unknown) explained that: ‘It kind of

17 Supplies are currently restricted to about 8–10 litres for each airline passenger. See http://article.wn.com/view/2014/01/26/Saudias_new_Zamzam_water_service_Saudi_Arabian_Airlines/

shook me and put me in my place, and it told me where I was and made my *iman* [faith] stronger'. Finally, for Robina (40s, artist, South of England, Hajj 2007), it was an 'epiphany' even more valuable and memorable than becoming a mother, 'because it allowed me to be myself'.

Yet, as some of the remarks here also intimate, the spiritual efficacy of such performances may or may not be so easily maintained amidst the complex and multiple lived structures and subjectivities of everyday life. Riyadh (40s, designer, London, Hajj 1997) explained 'it's very, very uplifting, especially the first few days after the Hajj coming back home, but the prayer we normally do to God is to keep that spiritual uplift for longer, for the rest of our life if possible'. Of course, utopian experiences in the Holy Places can be revisited temporarily by crossings over into the transcendent imagination, memory, and dreams that expand out of mundane time-space locations (Tweed 2006; Vásquez 2011). This is sometimes sparked by particular sacralised material objects and the senses. According to Nilofa (20s, London, teacher, Umra 1998), 'The Ka'ba *Sharif* is actually drenched in a particular perfume which is still with me today. I think I can still smell it'. However, even in a context where religioning is more evidently mobile and performed across different glocal scales than ever before, it seems that sacralised and sacralising experiences can be most intense as part of physical journeying to particular places and the embodied experience of 'being there'.

Some British Muslim *hajjis* articulate a genuine sense of loss on leaving the Holy Places and being reincorporated into everyday rhythms. This only reinforces a desire to return. As Latif (20s, accountant, South of England, Hajj 2003) described, 'Once you're leaving you get that sadness that whether I'll ever be able to come back here again. Because once you've got it in your heart, you have a big yearning and longing to go back there'. Abida (30s, optometrist, North-West, Hajj 1998) expressed the same deeply felt sentiments, underlining again the contingency and contextuality of experiencing the sacred.

I wanted to hold on to that spiritual experience and my outlook on life ... but it was surprising how few months it took for everything to get back to normal. One of my husband's colleagues asked me, "How was it for you?". I said, "To come back to this life now in the UK it's very, very difficult." He thought I sounded quite depressed. It wasn't depression; it was a real yearning to get back to that spiritual state that I'd been in.

Here, the easier and more frequent mass pilgrimages of the global Muslim middle classes draws attention to the hitherto often-idealised spiritual efficacy of Hajj-going. But for Nuh (60s, retired engineer, London, Hajj 1980s), at the scale of individual experience, there were still genuine spiritual benefits in being able to return to the Holy Places at a later stage of life.

I think with the passing of time, with age, probably you see it in a different way. The first time I went for Hajj it was, for me, mostly a discovery. So I was not so much spiritual, I was worried, “Am I doing the right thing? Am I doing the wrong thing?” The second time you go you are a bit more experienced, so you are more spiritual.

Two-thirds of respondents who spoke about the question of return to the Holy Places were unanimous in their desire to go back. Following the Prophetic example, Zubair (60s, retired businessman, London, Hajj 1993) suggested that one should perform the Hajj only once, not least because so many Muslims worldwide still have to wait decades for the privilege.¹⁸ As an alternative, Tanweer (30s, chemist, West Yorkshire, Hajj 2005) and Riyadh (40s, designer, London, Hajj 1997) spoke of taking their children for the Umra, which even more so than the Hajj is a religious-tourism boom industry. Many were undoubtedly intoxicated by their ‘connection [to Mecca and Medina]’ (Danyal, 40s, engineer, Scotland, Hajj 1999), ‘its ‘magnetic pull ... you just feel as if you just want to, you *need* to go back’ (Nasreen, 30s, mother, North-West, Umra 2010). Similarly, Arif (20s, student, West Midlands, Umra 1998) ‘just craved to go back ... not because my religion says so, not just because of that ... because *within* I have to do it’. In yet another comparison to other forms of travel, Maryam (30s, company director, North-West, Hajj 2007) reflected ‘sometimes you go on holiday and you think, “Oh, I’ve done it and that’s it now.” But Hajj is an experience which you want to do over and over again’.

For British Muslims, then, shaped by late-modern secular and consumer-capitalist lived structures, the Hajj and Umra inevitably correspond to the idea of ‘holidays’ at least as much as the idea of ‘pilgrimage’ (cf. Baumann 1996; Badone & Roseman 2004; Stausberg 2011). Yet, in their discursive utterances just as much as in their embodied performances, the Hajj especially does still remain ‘set apart’, still too profound to be discussed in quite the same breath. Mobeen (40s, General Practitioner, West Yorkshire, Hajj 2008) identified the Holy Cities as the ideal dwelling place, somewhere he truly belongs. ‘I feel like it’s my spiritual home, I feel safe there. And on any holiday that I would go on in the future really there’s no other place better than to go to Mecca and to go to Medina’.

Conclusion

This chapter contributes one of the few systematic accounts of late modern Muslims’ lived experiences of performing the Hajj. Analysing British Muslims’ recollections gathered by the British Museum in 2011, I have signalled the utility

18 At present (2013–14), the Saudi authorities are enforcing a ruling that pilgrims cannot return for the Hajj within five years.

of pilgrimage studies for Hajj research. This is equally true of older paradigms associated with sacred place, liminality and *communitas*, as postmodern approaches emphasising contestations of the sacred. However, working across a wider range of disciplines from the anthropology of Islam to sociology of religion and diaspora studies, I view the Hajj principally as an example of Muslim religionising across local, multi-local and supra-local spatial scales. Therefore I dwell not only on the Hajj in Mecca but also religiously inspired and everyday experiences in various time-space locations before, during and after pilgrimage. I argue that through embodied actions associated with the Hajj, its preparation and remembrance, British Muslims actively shape their own self-identities, spirituality and emotional lives, while at the same time reproducing authoritative Islamic scripts. However, the fragility of such performances by British Muslim actors positioned by multiple, complex and sometimes paradoxical lived structures including consumer capitalism and secularity, means that 'real' Hajj stories also include unscripted uncertainties and ambivalences.

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